

Tri coach focuses on whole athlete

By Susan Wood

GARDNERVILLE – Work smarter, not harder may well be the mantra for triathlete coach Marc Evans.

The fitness pioneer who has trained two-time Ironman champion Scott Tinley, an early legend in the endurance sport's circle, has dedicated his life to teaching athletes how to live up to their physical and mental conditioning capacity without giving up other parts of their lives.



Marc Evans

He began doing triathlons at the advent of sport in the early 1980s. But it's through his coaching either in groups or one-on-one that he's found a belief in balance – the kind an athlete practices physically and the type that keeps one's life in order.

“You can do an Ironman training nine hours a week,” Evans said, as he gave a tour of his new 1,600-square-foot studio that is steps from his Carson Valley home that he shares with his chocolate Lab, Edge. Even the 14-year-old canine has the right name for his master's sport and livelihood.

Evans, 56, emphasizes being “a coach, not a trainer.” He focuses on the big picture, like other Ironman greats Tinley,

Dave Scott and Marc Allen. Allen won the event nine times before retiring.

“All these guys had a unique part of them that went beyond their physical talents. But some people become excessive. It becomes too much when it has impact on your life. I tell my people to ski or snowshoe in a prescriptive way,” he said. That’s defined as a workout mixed in with a flair for fun.

Evans has traveled the globe to share his theories and techniques with others who want to thrive in their sport. These include a 1991 excursion to the Himalayas as the fitness and conditioning director for an American Everest expedition. He recalled a heart-warming moment in Kathmandu, the launching pad for climbers in Nepal, in which he discovered a 50-meter pool adequate for Olympic training near the popular Monkey Temple. A line of Nepalese kids watched in awe at seeing a man swimming laps.

He also served a stint on an elite performance-testing program at the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs. As a two-time head coach for the USA Triathlon Olympic team, his credentials read like a “Who’s Who” in the sport. Ironman involves swimming 2.4 miles, cycling 112 miles and running a marathon of 26.2 miles – always in that order.

Now, he’s hunkering down in an attempt to bring more athletes to him. One client hails from London.

Evans built the studio, about a \$200,000 investment, on his 2.5 acres. Weight machines are in the loft, on the first floor is a treadmill, a running training platform on rollers, and a swimming flume. The 8-foot-by-14-foot pool allows the swimmer to be in movement without swimming an actual lap.

“The value of these versus a swimming pool is the instant feedback,” Evans said. “Most triathletes are not particularly skilled in swimming. Swimming is kind of a nemesis.”

He installed a mirror on the bottom of the pool so swimmers can see their movements. There's also a video camera so evaluations can be conducted later. Videotaping is an essential component of Evans' training regimen. The training centers around assessment.

"I don't think people spend enough time on technique," he said.

Evans set up a dorm with a number of bunk beds behind the studio and recently established one-day to one-week training camps. He feeds the athletes what he makes for himself. The menu is organic, leaning toward vegetarian. The cost starts at \$500 for the day.

The participant signs up for a screening under an extensive matrix to evaluate the athlete's status.

"The big reward is having (clients) discover who they are and trust in our relationship," he said.

More than two-thirds of Evans' client base is women.

"I tend to attract busy people who have time limits because of family and work," he said.

Full-time client Kris Kruse-Elliot, 51, fits the bill. The veterinarian, who works with Evans a few times a year, has been doing triathlons as long as Evans has coached – 25 years. The San Francisco Bay Area resident turned to Evans for Ironman training five years ago when her work schedule often topped 60 hours a week.

She admitted to overtraining and found herself prone to injuries from her heel to her shoulder. As a competitive swimmer in high school, none of her coaches worked on technique.

"I was just killing myself," she said.

But being under Evans' wing, even her husband has noticed the difference.

"He's brilliant with his training. My husband said I'm not so tired," she said.

She's healthier and finds her running shoes last longer than four months.

"I used to land on my heel hard," she said. The duo worked on her foot placement and posture in running drills on a track.

As for results, Kruse-Elliott points to Evans' training as the reason for her Ironman personal best of 13 hours, 28 minutes – one hour less than her previous results.

"And I have fun doing it now," she said.

Evans' training facility can be reached via phone at (775) 783.9294 or (775) 200.3076. The website, www.evanscoaching.com, spells out the details of his business.